

# Promoting Critical Thinking in a Classroom Project of Ethnic Comparison: 2 Cultures

Oran Algeria North  
Africa



Oxford Mississippi  
USA



# What is Critical Thinking?



- Thinking that improves logic to motivate learning.
- Thinking that promotes tolerance and understanding between student and teacher.
- Thinking that allows questions and evaluations.
- Thinking that results in reasoning and blending of information.
- Thinking that encourages comparisons after reasoning and blending.
- Thinking that results in asking and answering significant questions.
- Thinking that allows collection of knowledge for continued discovery by both student and teacher.

# Who am I?

- English Language Fellow  
in Oran Algeria
- Newcomer to Algeria  
North Africa
- family oriented religious  
culture
- Native of Mississippi  
Deep South USA
- family oriented religious  
culture

# Three Viewpoints Underlying Definition of Critical Thinking

- 1. Krashen's Affective Filter
- 2. Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives
- 3. Freire's Pedagogy of Questions

# 1. Krashen's Affective Filter

- EFL students vary in ability to learn due to **attitude** concerning target culture and language
- Teachers should try to lower affective filter
- Filter at high level  
minimum input
- Filter at low level more  
input, more critical  
thinking processes result!



## 2. Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

Teachers' objectives should be  
affective, psychomotor, and  
cognitive

Learning process should be well  
rounded or holistic

Cognitive objectives promote  
critical thinking

# How does Bloom's *cognitive objective of teaching* encourage Critical Thinking?

- Through student observation, identification and collection of data.
- Through understanding of information via questioning and summarizing.
- Through use of information in classifying and presenting comparisons.
- Through combining former personal opinions with new facts in order to draw conclusions.
- Through creation of new opinions and viewpoints.
- Through evaluation and assessment of differences or similarities and recognition of one's own individual subjectivity and identity.

### 3.Freire's Pedagogy of Questions

- Critical thinking is enhanced by questions teachers pose to students and to questions students are allowed to pose to teachers.
- Critical thinking gives the student time to doubt or give his or her personal opinion.
- Critical thinking invites teachers to consider themselves as communicative equals to the students.
- Critical thinking encourages teachers to ask questions in different ways.
- Critical thinking respects each student's point of view. It allows students to discuss issues involving own life situations and problems.
- Critical thinking involves a two way learning process between teacher and student.



# Personal past and present efforts as EFL/ ESL teacher

- Strived to involve my culture and that of my students.
- Noticed that students gain motivation to learn when involving own culture and family in learning process. Talk of one's own **family ignites deep emotions.**
- Aided by the additional knowledge of Critical Thinking and its implementation into classroom activities.

# The EFL Classroom Project

Comparison of ethnic diversity in 2 cities

**Oxford Mississippi  
USA**



**Oran Algeria North  
Africa**



# Similarities between cultures of Oxford and Oran

- Both had known colonization.
- Both had known racism and the injustices it inflicted upon inhabitants.
- Both had seen war and civil unrest.
- Both possessed native populations and languages.
- Both contained a population mixture of various ethnic origins.
- Both are known today for their hospitality!

# Examples of ethnic diversity

- **Oxford 2005 census - 300 years of data.**
- 30% English, Scottish and Irish origins.
- 70% Native American, French, Italian, Dutch, Polish, Sub-Saharan, Asian Indian, African, Norwegian, Chinese, French Canadian, Welsh, Mexican, Russian, and Swedish.
- **Oran unofficial 2006 census - 1100 years of data - more than 50 ethnic origins.**
- Examples: Berber, Irakian, Yemenite, Hidjaz, Ethiopian, Andalusian, Turkish, Chinese, Sub-Saharan, Roman, Phoenician, Spanish, French, Libyan, Syrian, Israelian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Saudi Arabian, Germanic, and Toureg.

# City Similarities

## Oran and Oxford

- **Oxford.**
  - University city 12,000 citizens and 12,000 university students.
  - Government of mayor and board of aldermen,
  - County seat.
  - Open air markets.
  - Cultural centers ex.Ford Center.
  - Known for blues and jazz, music.
  - Airports.Hospitals.Parks.
  - Known for musicians and writers.
  - Known for peaceful atmosphere and hospitable citizens.
- **Oran**
  - University city 2,000,000 citizens over 100,000 university students.
  - Government of mayor and counselors.
  - *Wilaya* seat.
  - Open air markets.
  - Cultural centers ex.Theatre Alloula.
  - Known for Rai music.
  - Airports.Hospitals.Parks.
  - Known for musicians and writers.
  - Known for peaceful atmosphere and hospitable citizens.

# Similar City Problems/Aspirations

## **Oxford**

- Lack of employment due to outsourcing.
- Lack of housing, with rapidly growing population and many building projects.
- Economical growth and better future envisioned.

## **Oran**

- Lack of employment due to restructuring.
- Lack of housing, with rapidly growing population and many building projects.
- Economical growth and better future envisioned.

# Famous Oxford Musicians

Elvis



B.B.King





# Famous Oran Musicians

Khaled



Cheikha Remitti



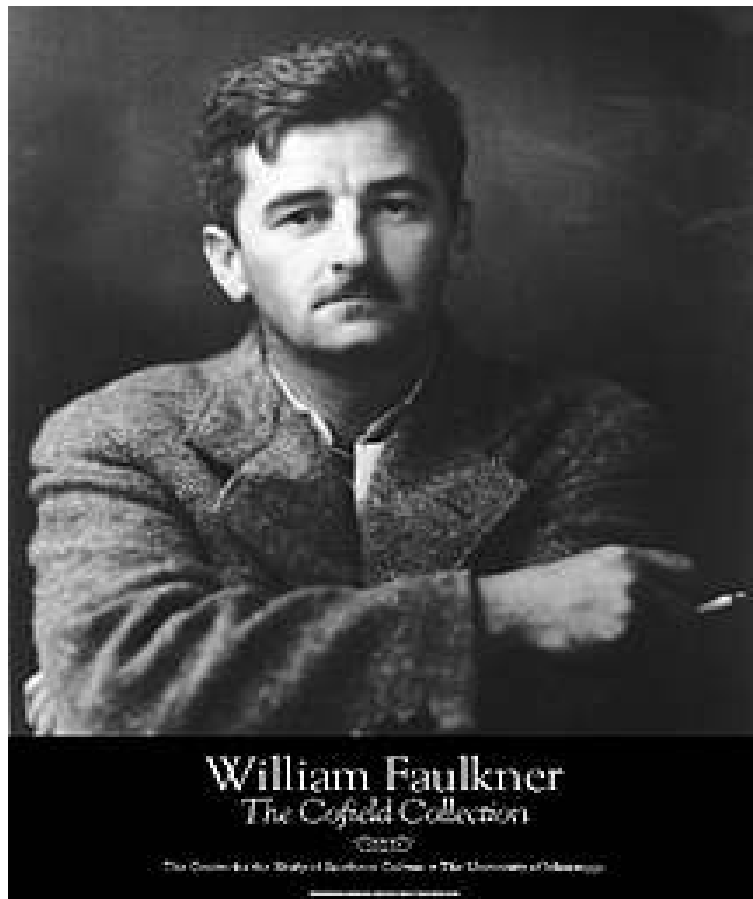
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# Famous Oxford Writers

William Faulkner



John Grisham



# Famous Oran Writers

- Fatima Bakhai
- Abdelmalek Alloula
- Hamid Skif

Hamid Skif

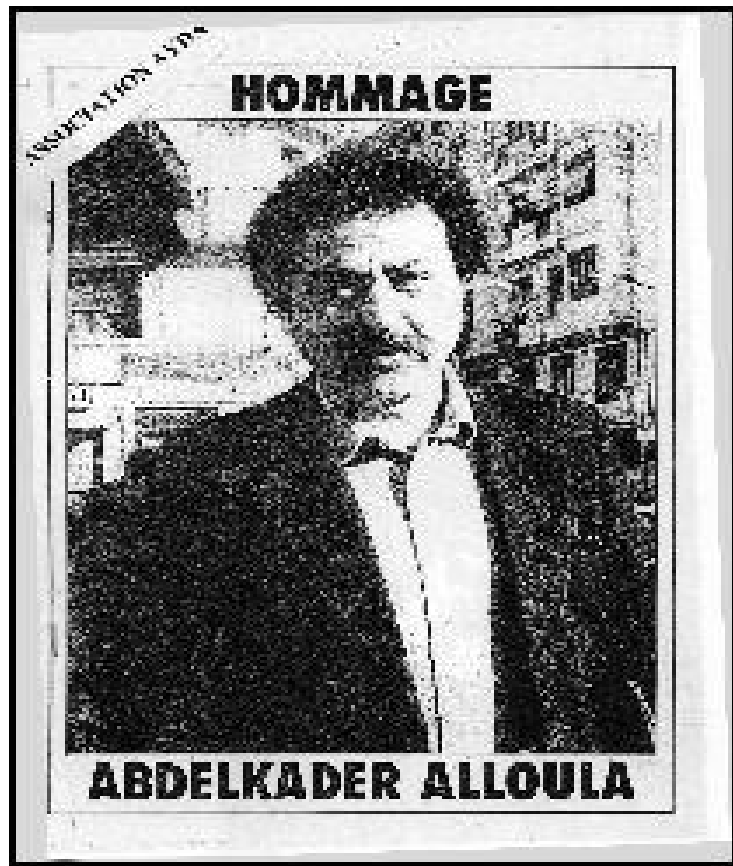


# Famous Oxford Actor

- Morgan Freeman



# Famous Oran Playwright

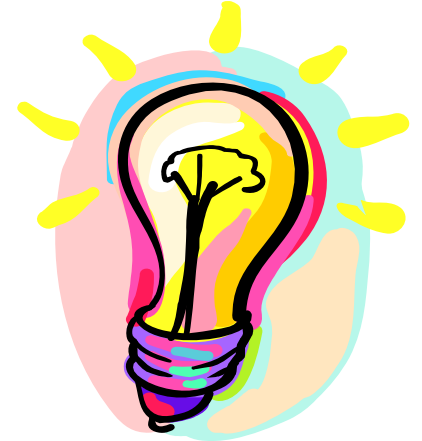


- Abdelkader Alloula

# Students' First Impressions

- Hey we are not so different after all!
- Is it like that in your city too?
- People have problems similar to ours?
- Do you also have various ethnic groups and different languages spoken?

# Reminder



- Thinking that improves **logic** to motivate learning.
- Thinking that promotes **tolerance and understanding** between student and teacher.
- Thinking that **allows questions and evaluations**.
- Thinking that results in **reasoning and blending** of information.
- Thinking that **encourages comparisons after reasoning and blending**.
- Thinking that **results in asking and answering** significant questions.
- Thinking that **allows collection of knowledge for continued discovery** by both student and teacher.

# Project conclusion: Students' remarks

- **Siham:** It was great finding similarities between your culture and ours and through this I was also able to see some differences.
- **Medhi:** This project gave a good image of Algeria to anyone reviewing it.
- **Halima:** I recognized differences of culture, race, and languages. Besides this we are all the same.
- **Sofiane:** This project gave me information I didn't know before about America and about Algeria.
- **Soumia:** I noticed similarities but also was able to reflect on differences.
- **Amine:** I was happy to have first hand information about writers and musicians in both cities.
- **Soraya:** It gave me information about my own culture and identity.
- **Hind:** I felt like we were all very similar.
- **Mohamed:** It was good to know we are all similar. I think Algeria is a *melting pot* just like America.
- **Farah:** I saw slight differences but realized we are all simply human beings.

# Using Critical Thinking in Teaching

- *I used the computer lab program HOTS or Higher Order Skills Question Templates to define **5 categories of questions** that encourage Critical Thinking skills.*
- **1. Recall.**
- **2. Analysis.**
- **3. Comparison.**
- **4. Inference.**
- **5. Evaluation.**



# Oxford and Oran Ethnic Portraits

- 8 slides containing ethnic portraits of citizens of Oxford and citizens of Oran were removed from the slide show. The slides contained photos and backgrounds of individuals and were removed for reasons of privacy.

# Examples of 5 Question Categories



1. **Recall** *Name 5 ethnic origins in both Oxford and Oran cultures.*
2. **Analysis** *Is the project information relevant to the teacher's objective of learning English through cultural comparison?*
3. **Comparison** *Compare your opinion - also possibly that of your colleagues - of the target culture from before the project study with your opinion after the completion of the project study.*
4. **Inference** *Predict what would happen if members of both cultures could meet before and after the project information is exchanged.*
5. **Evaluation** *Give and justify your opinion on the cultural barriers and conflicts to language learning.*

# Additional Tips for Teachers

## Encouraging Critical Thinking

### **\*Listen to students opinions.**

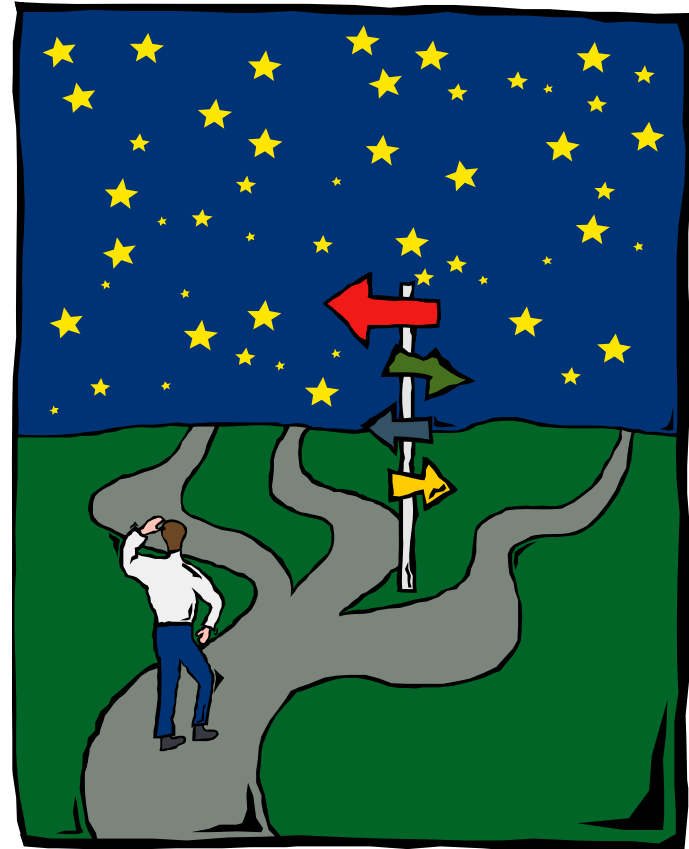
*Students may have issues concerning class subject matter or personal problems. Teachers can for example place the issue in pictorial form, ask questions from concrete to analytical, define the issue, personalize the issue , discuss the issue and discuss the alternatives to the problems the issue causes.*

### **\*Use precise terminology.**

*By altering certain expressions when asking questions teachers can better promote critical thinking.*

# Examples of Addressing Issues Using Critical Thinking

- **Example:** What decisions would an EFL/ESL student have to make while attending a foreign university? Discuss this pictorial representation of decision making. Have the students describe the picture, define the issue, and personalize it. Discuss the issue in class.
- Discuss alternatives to the issue of decision making in this situation.



# Using Improved Terminology to Enhance Critical Thinking



- **Word replacement suggestions:**
- Instead of *look* – *compare*.
- Instead of *think* – *predict*.
- Instead of *think of* – *conclusions drawn*.
- Instead of *explain* – *what evidence to support*.
- Instead of *work a problem* – *analyze a problem*.

# Examples of improved terminology

1. **Let's *compare* the two cultures.** (instead of : Let's look at the two cultures.)
2. **How would you *predict* this situation will end?** (instead of : How would you think this situation will end?)
3. **What *conclusions can you draw* about the poet's intent after reading this poem?** (instead of : What do you think about this poet's intentions?)
4. **What *evidence do you find to support* the relationship between target culture barriers and language learning?** (instead of : Explain the relationship between target culture barriers and language learning.)
5. **Let's *analyze* the problem.** (instead of : Let's work on the problem.)

# Why Encourage and Promote Critical Thinking?



- Our world is highly technical and competitive.
- Students must process new information constantly.
- Research shows that Critical Thinking skills can be taught effectively.
- Critical Thinking enhances positive cultural exchange and language learning.

# Conclusion: How...

## To Implement Critical Thinking?

- Plan activities.
- Respect students as individuals.
- Provide activities that avoid excessive controversy.
- Use flexibility.
- Remain positive.
- Create a positive atmosphere in class.





# Test yourselves!

How well can you discover questions promoting critical thinking?

- Examine the following passage from the short story *A Rose for Emily* by William Faulkner.
- In which of the five categories of questions would you place the following questions?
- Does the question enter into one of the 5 categories or should the terminology be altered?

Choose **one answer(1 to 6)** to describe each of the following questions:

1. Recall
2. Analysis
3. Comparison
4. Inference
5. Evaluation
6. \*Question terminology should be altered.

# Excerpt *A Rose for Emily*

## William Faulkner

- *I want some poison, she said to the druggist. She was over thirty then, still a slight woman, though thinner than usual, with cold, haughty black eyes in a face the flesh of which was strained across the temples and about the eye-sockets as you imagine a light-housekeeper's face ought to look. I want some poison, she said. Yes Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I'd recom...*
- *I want the best you have. I don't care what kind.*
- *The druggist named several. They'll kill anything up to an elephant. But what you want is...*
- *Arsenic, Miss Emily said. Is that a good one?*
- *Is...arsenic? Yes, ma'am. But what you want...*
- *I want arsenic.*
- *The druggist looked down at her. She looked back at him, erect, her face like a strained flag. Why of course, the druggist said. If that's what you want. But the law requires you to tell what you are going to use it for.*
- *Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The delivery boy brought her the package, the druggist didn't come back. When she opened the package at home there was written on the box, under the skull and bones: For rats.*

# Questions

Place the Answers 1-6 in the Space Provided to describe the category of each question.

- Which person had the more decided manner...Miss Emily or the druggist?\_\_\_\_\_
- What was the name of the poison Miss Emily bought?\_\_\_\_\_
- What do you think about Miss Emily's intentions?\_\_\_\_\_
- Predict what would have happened if the druggist had refused to sell the poison to Miss Emily.\_\_\_\_\_
- Did this excerpt vividly describe the character of Miss Emily? Defend your answer.\_\_\_\_\_
- Give an example of your idea of a salesman who would react in a similar manner as the druggist?\_\_\_\_\_

## Answers

- 3. Comparison
- 1. Recall
- 6. Question that needed altered terminology. It would have been better to say *What conclusions can you draw concerning Miss Emily's intentions?*
- 4. Inference
- 5. Evaluation
- 2. Analysis

# Facing the challenge

- **Critical Thinking** within cultural exchange and language instruction is a channel of thought, but one that remains a challenge; because it involves the untouchable quality and uniqueness of the human intellect. **Motivation** and **cultural exchange** are also essential in the student-teacher relationship. Neither student nor teacher will be perfect in the endeavor to promote critical thinking. This endeavor remains one that is long lasting and calls for an occasional exchange of ideas among teachers.
- I invite you to find other activities promoting **critical thinking** similar to the one I presented. If you have success with a particular activity I would love to hear from you. You can contact me for comments or for any helpful information you think we could exchange.



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